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THE LABOUR DAY.

Protection and Free Trade

From the Workman's
Point of View.

BY

M. MALTMAN BARRIE.



London :

GEORGE VICKERS, 172 Strand, W.C.

1905.



1900

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Yours faithfully
M. Maltman Barrie

To Captain Wells, R. N.

Principal Agent of the Conservative Party

with the Author's respectful compliments.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THE major portion of the matter contained in these pages formed a paper which was read before the Aberdeen Trades Council fifteen years ago and afterwards printed and published by that body. Other portions appeared at different times in the "Nineteenth Century" and other reviews, and are reproduced here with the express permission of the editors of these publications. The remainder is fresh matter, written in relation to the present tariff reform campaign, and is now published for the first time.

"SPRINGFIELD,"

SOUTH NORWOOD,

March, 1905.

THE LABOUR DAY.

AMONGST men of all schools and all parties there is general agreement that the question of the condition of the people is one of the most important that can occupy the thoughts or engage the attention of mankind. It is true, of course, that the words "condition" and "people" mean different things to different minds. The theologian, when he speaks of the "condition" of his flock, is thinking of their spiritual state. To the physician the "condition" of his patient relates solely to the health of mind and body; while, to the political economist, the words "condition of the people" mean their material possessions, economic circumstances, and general surroundings. The comparative importance of these three conditions is the subject of much controversy. If one has not health of mind and body, all other possessions are of but little value. Yet it is not to be forgotten that poverty is often the cause, and always an aggravation, of mental and physical suffering. Again, it was said by One of old, who spake as never man spake, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Nothing, truly; yet, as in the case of ill health, so, also, in the case of sin, it is not to be forgotten that poverty is often the cause. Both for myself and for all mankind do I most ardently desire perfect health alike of soul, of mind, and of body. But, with all reverence and humility, I hold that the possession of material wealth, in sufficient abundance to supply all our physical wants, is a great aid to the possession of these blessings. Indeed, I go further and say that it is an almost indispensable necessary. I am not speaking of great riches—for these, in turn, also tempt to vice—but of a competency as defined above. Nor do I say that poverty and bodily health, or poverty and moral excellence, are absolutely incompatible. I only say that they are very difficult and very rare combinations; and that competency and bodily health, competency and virtue, are much easier and

more frequently to be found together. I do not anticipate that many people will dissent from these conclusions. They are, in fact, evident to every observant mind. But if anyone is in doubt he will find them amply confirmed by official and unquestioned statistics. The official returns from our prisons show that almost the whole of their inmates come from the poorer section of the community. The test of education, although not conclusive, is a fairly true one. Not many wealthy men or women are quite uneducated, and the proportion of illiterates in our prisons is so great as almost to pass belief. It is quite true that outside, in the general community, the poorer section is much more numerous than the well-to-do, and that therefore it would be only natural that their numbers inside the prisons should also be greater. But the proportions are not the same in both places. Out of every ten men one passes in the street, at least one is in affluent circumstances. Out of every thousand inmates of our prisons, at least nine hundred and ninety have come from the poorer class. These figures are, I think, conclusive evidence that poverty and crime, so frequently found together, stand in large measure in the relation of cause and effect. I am aware, of course, of the counter argument that poverty is, in many cases, not the cause, but the result, of crime; and there is undoubtedly a great deal of truth in it. In many, many cases poverty is the result, and not the cause, of crime. That is undeniable. But, making the fullest possible allowance for all these cases, it is certain that they form but a small percentage of the whole, and that the vast majority are of the opposite kind. This the education test proves conclusively. In the cases where poverty is not the inciting cause the criminal usually belongs to the well-to-do classes; these classes are almost all educated; and the prison returns tell us how very few of these are within the walls. It may be said that the poor commit many sins and crimes not due to their poverty, such for example, as spring from drunkenness and animal passion. But that argument, upon examination, is found not to go very far; for we cannot help remembering that drunkenness is itself very often an indirect result of poverty and miserable surroundings, and that wealth and education usually refine the taste and give to their possessor such a measure of self-respect and power of self-restraint as urge and enable him to control his mere animal propensities. Wherefore it

seems, to me at any rate, after considering the question from every point of view, that poverty is the great enemy; and for that reason, as well as because I am neither physician nor theologian, I shall, in these pages, discuss the question of the condition of the people from the material or economic standpoint only.

We have seen that, in speaking of the condition of the people, the word "condition" has different meanings in different minds. It is the same with the word "people." Technically, of course, the people of a country are the whole of its inhabitants, from its highest ruler to its lowest pauper, criminal, or slave. But that is not, as we all know, the sense in which the word is ordinarily used. It is ordinarily used, in this country, at least, to denote more particularly the poorer, or working, sections of the community, at times including the middle class or, at least, a portion thereof. Rarely, if ever, is it used in its strict and proper sense, namely, as comprising the whole population. In practice, it is recognised that the nation is divided into three great social classes, the upper, the middle, and the lower; the line that divides the first from the second and third being "birth" or "descent"; the gulf that separates the third from the two others being its poverty. It is the last-named, the working class, that alone requires help or needs consideration; the other two, the middle and upper classes, can take care of themselves. Wherefore it results that, when we say that the question of the condition of the people is one of the most important that can occupy our thoughts, we mean, by "the condition of the people," the economic condition of the working class.

Let us now consider what is this condition, this economic condition of the working class, that demands and deserves our attention. It is, admittedly, a condition of hardship, of privations, of life-long suffering. At the top, no doubt, there are many men of the working class, men of exceptional ability and character, who earn what are called good wages and who are blessed with continuous good health which enables them to keep constantly employed, and whose lives, therefore, are tolerably comfortable. But these, after all, are very few, in comparison with the vast bulk of their fellows who have neither their health nor their ability, and whose lives are a weary round of exhausting daily toil and a prolonged struggle for existence. The long and laborious task, the scanty and inferior food, the wretched and insanitary homes, the insuffi-

cient clothing, the corroding anxieties—any one of these would suffice to poison life ; combined they reduce their victims to a condition of living death. They starve and stunt the body, enfeeble the mind, and enshroud the childhood of the workers in an atmosphere of pollution which is doubtless responsible for many after-lives of crime and degradation. The misery of the workers is indeed very great and very real, although the fact is often loudly denied by many of the wealthy and well-to-do. But one simple test proves the insincerity of these denials. What wealthy or well-to-do man ever voluntarily divests himself of his possessions and descends into the ranks of the workers? Not one. On the contrary, when that wealth is taken from its possessors by misfortune, as sometimes happens, how often do we see the dispossessed committing suicide rather than face the dreadful horrors of poverty.

Such then is the condition of the worker. How is that condition to be amended? To answer that question we must first ascertain why the worker is in that condition, what is the cause of his economic subjection. The cause lies upon the surface : it is competition, the competition of his fellow-worker. The supply of labour power on sale in the world labour market is in excess of the demand. Therefore, a portion of the labour remains unemployed, and the portion that is employed is paid only a subsistence wage. The excess supply lowers the market value of the remainder to the bare necessities of life, to the equivalent of those commodities necessary to enable the labourer to perform his task. The effectiveness, the intrinsic value, of the labour power of the individual worker offered for sale in the world market is different in different places ; the natives of India and China, for example, being less active and energetic than the inhabitants of Northern Europe and the United States of America. So, also, differs the cost of subsistence in these regions, that of the Asian being from one-fourth to one-tenth of that of the skilled workman of London and New York. The latter, living in the midst of great riches, riches that he has himself produced, has struggled up to a standard of living that requires, as necessities, commodities which are undreamt-of luxuries to his Asiatic brother. Nor are the disparities between continents only. In different parts of Europe itself there are differences both in the labour power of the individual worker and in his standard of living, although these

differences are not so great as those between the average European and the average Asian. And now comes the crucial point, the point that vitally concerns the more favourably conditioned worker, the workman who is in possession of the higher standard of living. The lower-conditioned workers, both Asiatic and European, although now working in the lower-waged markets of the world, are capable of becoming workers in the higher-waged markets. Their work may, at first, be less effective, man for man, than the work of the present workers in these markets, but it may, even at first, serve the employers' purpose ; it will certainly become sufficiently effective for all practical purposes in time ; and it will, even from the beginning and for a long time afterwards, be so much cheaper than the labour it will displace that it will pay the employers well to employ it. The Chinamen whom Mr. Alfred Lyttelton is importing into South Africa may not at first be so efficient miners as white men would be, but they will become efficient in time, and they are so much cheaper that the mine-owners can afford to pay all the expense of their importation from China, to pay them a wage six times as much as they had at home, and still clear a large excess profit on the transaction, a profit, that is to say, largely in excess of the profit they would have made had they employed white labour. And this importation of Chinese labour into South Africa, it should be remembered, is no new departure : it is only the continuation and expansion of things already done by both political parties in Britain. Who shall say where the flood will stop ? South Africa may be regarded as the half-way house from China to this country : what security have the British workers that the voyage will always end there ? What claim to be provided with cheap labour have the mine owners of the Rand that is not possessed by the mine-owners of Scotland and England ? Already some of the coal-mines of Scotland are, I understand, full of diseased and sweated foreigners : how long will it be before their numbers are recruited by shiploads of Mr. Lyttelton's Chinamen, completing a voyage already half accomplished ? This is the future that the British workman has to look forward to, this is the flood by which he will be submerged if he takes no measures to arrest it.

The competition to which the British worker is at present subject, to which his present economic condition is due, and which

must be destroyed if that condition is to be amended, confronts him in two separate forms: firstly, in the form of the labour of his fellows, native and alien-born, in the home labour market; and, secondly, in the form of finished or part-made articles, the product of foreign labour. Dealing, first, with the second form of the evil, imported articles, it is evident that the only effective remedy is, not their taxation, but their absolute exclusion. The British workman does not desire merely that the British consumer shall pay more for his foreign-produced commodities. That would benefit the British workman only indirectly and almost inappreciably by the slight increase it would effect in the market value of similar commodities produced by himself. What he desires is that the British consumer shall purchase his products and no others, and that object can only be secured by the absolute exclusion of all foreign products—products that we can ourselves produce—from the British home market. From one cause and another—the chief cause being, generally, his own standard of living, a standard requiring higher wages than those paid to the producer of these commodities—the British workman cannot compete successfully against these foreign productions even in his own home market. Their exclusion from that market is, therefore, necessary in the interest of the British workman. I say the British workman cannot compete: I do not say the British merchant or employer. These, the merchant and employer, are but agents, middle-men, buyers and sellers of commodities (including labour), and their interests are not at all bound up with the interests of either those from whom they buy or those to whom they sell. In fact they may, and often do, make enormous fortunes out of the poverties of their respective clients. Therefore, I say that it is the British workman who cannot compete successfully against the cheaply-produced foreign articles, that he cannot compete against them unless he is willing to lower his standard of life, and that the only remedy is exclusion. It is not difficult to see the enormous gain that the exclusion of foreign products would be to the native producer, for it would enable him to obtain for his products their full intrinsic value from the consumer of the products, a value much greater than that now obtainable in the presence of cheap foreign competition. To the consumer—the non-producing consumer—the exclusion of foreign

products would, of course, be correspondingly disadvantageous, for he would have to pay the difference to the native producer of the commodities he consumed. This point, as well as the means by which the whole of the gain achieved shall be secured to the actual workers, is fully dealt with in succeeding pages.

The other form in which the British workman encounters the evil—competition—namely, the labour of his fellows in the labour market, must be dealt with by the double methods of exclusion and division. I do not advocate the expulsion of such foreign workmen as are already in this country, although such a course might well be defended. But I do advocate the instant and absolute stoppage of the in-coming flood of destitute aliens that is pouring into this country to the economic injury of the native workers. And, the flood stopped, I advocate the immediate enactment by Parliament of a shortened labour day, so shortened and regulated that the work of the country would be divided equally amongst the workers of the country and the equal labour of every worker be necessary for the satisfaction of the wants of the community.

All proposals of economic reform, wherever, whenever, and however suggested, are invariably resisted from one quarter or another. And the reason is not far to seek. There never was an economic injustice but that someone profited by it ; and what more natural than that those who profit by it shall resist any attempt to end it ? Therefore it is that, dreadful as are the sufferings of the mass of the workers under the present system and present economic conditions, voices are heard defending that system and those conditions, and contending for their continuance. See, say these voices, how the country has prospered under them ! If you interfere with them, if you alter them or attempt to alter them, that prosperity will be destroyed and the country will be ruined ! Well, it is quite true that the country, taken as a whole, has prospered during the prevalence of the present system and the present conditions ; but that prosperity has not been equally divided. It has come mostly to the middle class ; and the working class, whose labour has been the chief factor in its production, have not received their just portion. Moreover, it is quite possible that, under another system and other conditions, the country might have been equally prosperous, with this material difference,

that the bulk of the prosperity would have come to its true creators, the working class, instead of to the middle class, its mere exploiters. The greatness and prosperity of one's country is a legitimate subject of pride and object of ambition, provided always that the prosperity is justly divided amongst its real producers and the greatness shared equally by the whole people. But if the greatness and prosperity are to be mainly appropriated by the idle and employing classes, to the practical exclusion of the working class, then the greatness and prosperity can have no charm for that class, and it is only natural that it should determine to alter the system and conditions under which such results are possible. The reforming workman who would go forward is not, however, less a patriot than is the reactionary aristocrat who would go back to his grandfather's time, or the stagnant *bourgeois* who is well satisfied with things as they are. The only difference between him and them is that he wishes his class to obtain a little more than they now possess of the prosperity of that country of which they are all so proud. Surely that is not an unreasonable desire, nor one which should lack the sympathy and support of every man interested in the question of the condition of the people.

In considering this question, it will be advantageous to remember that many efforts have already been made in this direction, and that they have all failed. Generation after generation has possessed its philanthropists; large-hearted, justice-loving men who, each in his own day and own way, tried to lighten the burdens of the oppressed toiler. Some of these efforts were not altogether fruitless. Here and there, to some extent and for some time, some slight mitigation of the workmen's hardships was effected; but they all failed to achieve the great task of complete economic emancipation, and the workers remain to-day, as in the past centuries, the slaves of the other sections of the community. In the earlier times they were bond-slaves; to-day they are wage-slaves. The change is only in name, their slavery to-day being as absolute and abject as it ever was. The failure of all these efforts, well-meant and courageously prosecuted, was due, in my opinion, to the simple fact that they did not attack the disease at the root, but dealt only with its symptoms. There was once an attack made on the true line,

Lord Ashley's Factory Acts, and it consequently achieved a measure of success greater than all the others, and effected a change whose blessings a portion of the workers still enjoy. Lord Ashley's motive in pleading for shorter hours for factory workers was purely humanitarian. He had no *arrière pensée* as to economic results, and legislated only for the women and children. But he builded better than he knew, and his Acts may yet form the foundation stone of the economic freedom of the British working class, for it is to the shortening of the hours of labour, the legislative restrictions of the labour day, accompanied, of course, by protection against underpaid foreign labour and foreign products, that the worker must look for his social and economic emancipation.

The question of the compulsory limitation of the hours of labour has not recently been so prominently before the public as it was some years ago. Various causes have contributed to this end. For one thing, the leaders of the different factions of the working class, the men who championed the Eight Hours Movement at that time, have, unfortunately, fallen out amongst themselves, devoting to mutual destruction energies that might have carried the movement far towards a successful issue. For another, external politics, more dramatic and exciting than home affairs, have lately almost monopolized public attention. And, for a third, it must be owned the workers themselves, who, their friends thought, had at last grasped the one plan which alone can free them from their economic bondage, the workers themselves have become lukewarm on the subject and appear, for the moment, to be either indifferent or hopeless about their own condition. Now and then they indulge in sectional strikes, in different trades, at different times, in different places, and for different objects. But almost all these spasmodic efforts have a strange air of unreality about them, as if even their promoters had no heart for them and were more than half-prepared for the defeat which was their invariable result. The workers have, in fact, at the present time, no definite head, no capable leaders. They are a flock of sheep, with any number of bell-wethers, but not one shepherd. And the bells of the bell-wethers only guide them to the shearing shed, where they are duly shorn. It may, however, be reasonably assumed that this state of things will not

last. Sooner or later a leader will certainly arise, and a policy be put forward, which shall, to some extent at least, unite the workers and re-kindle their enthusiasm. And the basis of that policy must, in the nature of the case, be Protection and the compulsory limitation of the labour day, for all other proposals for the permanent improvement of the economic condition of the working class will be found, in time, to be either useless or worse than useless.

The demand for a shorter labour day is due, in large measure, to the teachings of Karl Marx and to the active, practical exertions of his British disciples. For many years past, in Continental Europe, Marx has been recognized as the one and only true economist, and, latterly, his doctrines have taken root also in Britain, Australia, and America, in all of which countries the short hours movement is, for the most part, organised and directed by his followers. Marx founded the "International," and created the German Social Democratic Party. These were great achievements, but they sink into insignificance beside the movement for the shortening of the labour day which his disciples are conducting in every quarter of the civilised globe. The distinction of Marx's teaching is its legality. He was a revolutionist, no doubt, but he was also a philosopher. He knew that changes made by violence are often undone by the same means, whereas changes made by law are usually accepted and maintained. Hence he inclined more to the ballot-box than to the barricade, and hence also his followers' present desire for a legislative limitation of the labour day, rather than a series of violent and anarchic struggles.

The demand for the legislative restriction of the hours of labour rests on three main propositions: First, that the present economic condition of the workers is unjust; second, that that condition, being unjust, ought to be remedied; and, third, that the legislative restriction of the hours of labour is not only the best, but that, accompanied by protection against unfair foreign competition, is the only practicable and effective means by which that condition can be satisfactorily and permanently remedied. The first and second of these propositions are, of course, self-evident, but inasmuch as they are (practically) denied by many, it may be as well to go formally through the proofs.

The first proposition—that the present economic condition of

the workers is unjust—is proved by two facts, namely, that, under that condition, the workers have (*a*) more than their proportionate share of the work of the nation to perform; and (*b*) less than their proportionate share of the wealth of the nation to enjoy. Firstly, as to work. The fact itself is, of course, well known and undisputed; but, inasmuch as the extent of the inequality is not so well known, it may be useful to examine the point with some closeness.

The number of adult males in the United Kingdom may be said to be at present about 9,000,000. Of these, not less than 1,000,000 live in voluntary and wealthy idleness; rather more than another 1,000,000, including paupers, criminals, and vagrants, at the other end of the scale, in more or less enforced idleness and consequent want; leaving the whole of the work of the nation to be done—so far as it is done by its adult male population—by the remaining 7,000,000. Of these 7,000,000, at least another 1,000,000 may be put down as (*a*) working employers and (*b*) independent workers, that is, men working for and by themselves. This leaves, finally, about 6,000,000 of wage-receiving workers, by whom nearly all the work of the nation is undoubtedly performed.* The average hours of labour for each of these wage-receivers is at present about twelve per day, Saturdays included, making seventy-two hours per week. This includes week-day overtime, but is altogether exclusive of Sunday labour. The average hours of labour of the 1,000,000 working employers and men working for themselves, above referred to, may be taken to be at least equal to those of the wage-receiving workmen; so that we have a total of 7,000,000 adult male workers, of different classes, working on an average twelve hours every working day, seventy-two hours every week. Now, if the 2,000,000 adult male idlers above-mentioned, the voluntarily and involuntarily unemployed, were to take their proportionate share of the nation's work, the same amount of work that is now performed by the 7,000,000 working 12 hours per day and 72 hours per week, would then be performed by 9,000,000 working $9\frac{1}{3}$ hours per day or 56 hours per week. Therefore, $2\frac{2}{3}$ hours per day, or 16 hours per week, is the excess above

* These figures, while substantially accurate, are, of course, really approximations; the actual numbers fluctuating from time to time with the inflow and outflow of the labour market and the alternations of rising and falling trade. That is understood.

his just share which the average worker now performs. Thus I prove my first point as to the present unequal division of labour.

Next, as to the unequal division of wealth. The total annual income of the United Kingdom may be said to be at present at least £2,000,000,000 sterling. Some official estimates, issued many years ago, indicated an annual income, at that time, of about £1,500,000,000; and, making allowance for subsequent normal increase and for interested concealments of wealth (a material item), £2,000,000,000 may be taken as inside the present actual amount. Now, all this £2,000,000,000 is not, of course, the product of wage-receiving adult male labour. Part of it is the product of (*a*) the labour of women and children, of (*b*) the labour of the independent workmen who work for themselves, of (*c*) the labour of the employers who are also workers, and of (*d*) foreign investments. These numerous separate sources of income must all be recognised and their due proportions allotted to them. They must not be either forgotten or ignored. But it is the adult male wage-receiver and his position that constitute the main problem; the solution of it will involve the solution of the others; therefore it is on its solution that all our present arguments are concentrated.

Let us, then, deduct for these other sources of income, say, £500,000,000, a fourth of the whole, a most liberal allowance. We have still £1,500,000,000 left as the result of the labour of our 6,000,000 wage-receiving adult male workers. And when we divide that sum equally amongst these workers we find the amount to be exactly £250 per man per annum, or about £4 16s. 8d. per week. But what is the actual average wage received by these workers? Four pounds sixteen shillings and eightpence per week? We all know that it is not that. It is, at the present time, about 25s. per week, or £65 per annum. The average for England is about 27s. per week, for Scotland about 23s. 6d., and for Ireland about 18s., the gross average being, as stated, about 25s. Ten years ago, the gross average was only 23s. But during the past decade wages have steadily risen in many industries, the aggregate rise yielding, as nearly as can be ascertained, an average spread over all industries, of 2s. per man per week. This is, of course, a net result, the decreases being set against the increases, and a total balance struck. These figures then, reveal the startling

fact that, out of a total annual income of £2,000,000,000, of which they themselves produce at least three-fourths, the 6,000,000 wage-earning workers receive only £390,000,000, or £65 each; whereas the 2,000,000 non-producing consumers, working employers, etc., take £1,610,000,000, or £805 each.

It has been stated by some who are not conversant with the subject that the foregoing figures, notably the estimate of national income, are exaggerated. Very well. Let us suppose for the sake of argument, that they are exaggerated; that the national income is not £2,000,000,000, but only the £1,500,000,000 generally accepted, and that, of that latter sum, only £1,000,000,000, two-thirds of the whole, is due to the labour of the 6,000,000 workers. Suppose, further, that the average wage is not 25s., but, say, 27s., an enormous concession. What then? Why, even with all these points allowed, the result still is that, in return for his wage of 27s., each of the aforesaid 6,000,000 workmen produces value worth £3 4s. 1d. Let the objector take which set of figures he prefers. Both prove the worker to be robbed of the fruits of his labour; the difference between them is only a difference of degree. In the presence of these facts it is evident that the wealth of the country, as well as its labour, is most unequally and unjustly divided.

Having, then, proved that the workers have at present more than their proportionate share of the work to perform, and less than their just share of the wealth to enjoy, it follows that their present economic condition is unjust.

But although the condition is admittedly unjust, there are those who still deny that that condition can, or ought to, be changed, and who resist and obstruct all attempts to alter it by shortening the hours of labour. An increase of wages now and then they would not mind, but to all suggestions of a shorter labour day they are resolutely hostile. They know that the advance in wages given to-day can be recalled to-morrow or the day after, but that a shorter labour day would give the workers the command of the labour market, and that, once established, it could not be so easily withdrawn. These objectors are of two classes: first, those who object to a shorter labour day, however achieved; and, second, those who object—or, at least, profess to object—only to its legal enforcement. I will examine the various

objections of both classes in their order, and endeavour to answer them all. It may be said, What about wages? Do they not require attention and revision? The answer is that, if the hours of labour are shortened *until there is no surplus in the labour market*, not an idle man in the country, the law of supply and demand will itself adjust wages without any legislation, securing for the worker a wage that will be equal to the full value of his labour. At present there are in this country seven workmen to every six jobs; and, as the seventh man, the man who has been left out, is only too ready and willing to supplant any of the others for such return as will keep him from death by starvation, the employer has no difficulty in retaining the services of these others at a bare subsistence wage. He would pay them even less than that—and, in fact, in many cases does so—but for the reflection that he requires their continuous service and wishes that service to be of an efficient character, and realises that that service cannot be both continuous and efficient unless the man who has to render it receives at least a subsistence wage. In many cases, as I have said, less than a subsistence wage is paid; but that is, as a rule, for unskilled services, which anyone can perform, which need not be continuous, and which can easily be obtained, when required, from the constantly overflowing surplus in the labour market. Less than a subsistence wage is also paid to thousands and thousands of young women who are employed in what are called the genteel occupations, and whose employers—many of them public men of saintly reputation—expect them to eke out their scanty weekly pittance by earnings in a connection that cannot be named. But, as a rule, taking all classes of workers, a subsistence wage is paid. When the labour day is shortened and the six jobs have become seven, or perhaps eight, all this will be changed. The services of the seventh man will then be very urgently required, and, freed from their mutual ent-throat competition, the seven men will be in a position to induce their employer—compel him, if necessary—to pay them, not a subsistence wage, but the full value of their labour, whatever that may be. There will be no necessity to pass an Act of Parliament respecting wages; these will adjust themselves. Society, having need of the services of labour to minister to its daily wants, and having the means thereto, will pay the price necessary to obtain those services; and that price

will be determined automatically by the inexorable law of supply and demand, and will be found to correspond with the full value of the labour rendered. Shorten the labour day to the point indicated, and all the other economic evils that surround the worker will vanish of themselves.

The first objection advanced by the first of the above-named classes is that any attempt to shorten the labour day in this country must fail, because the workers are themselves opposed to it. The workmen, these opponents assert, are well satisfied with the present system, and wish to be left free to work for as many hours as they like and as much overtime as they can get. The answer to that is that, even if the assertion were true, it would not, as we shall see presently, make the plea a valid one; but that, as a matter of fact, it is not true. It is, on the contrary, the fact that the vast majority of British workmen are intensely dissatisfied with the present system, and ardently desire its alteration. But there are amongst workmen, as amongst other classes, men of limited intelligence and sluggish disposition. And some of these men, not understanding the question and fearing that short hours *must* mean short wages, shrink from what they regard as a doubtful if not dangerous experiment. They are aware, in a vague way, that their condition is not what it ought to be, but they do not see how it is to be improved. They feel, moreover, quite truly, that their condition, bad as it is, is better than that of many of their fellows (the unemployed), and they fear that, like the dog in the fable, they will lose the bone in clutching at the shadow. And they are inclined rather to endure the ills they have than fly to others they know not of. These men, however, are but a small minority of the workers, a minority, moreover, that is rapidly diminishing. As this is a point about which there is much dispute, it may be as well to mention one or two facts bearing on it. The working men of the United Kingdom are, in round numbers, close upon 7,000,000. Of these, about 1,500,000, one fifth of the whole, are members of trade unions. With regard to these trade unionists, we have some data to guide us to their opinions. So long ago as 1888 a plebiscite was taken by the trade unions of the country on the two questions (*a*) "Are you in favour of an eight hours' limit of the day's work—total 48 hours per week?" and (*b*) "Are you in favour of Parliament enforcing an eight hours day

by law?" The replies were (a) Yes, 22,720; No, 4097. (b) Yes, 17,267; No, 3819. This seems pretty decisive, showing that the workers are not only in favour of the shortening of the labour day, but are also in favour of its enforcement by the strong arm of the law. And I may add, as confirmation of these decisions, that a resolution in favour of a "Legal Eight Hours Day" has been a standing item in the programme of every Trade Union Congress for some years past, that it is always adopted with ever-increasing majorities, in later years unanimously. So that, as far as the organized workers of the country are concerned, it is not possible to contend that they are opposed to the legal shortening of the labour day. With regard to the 5,500,000 non-unionists it is safe to assume that a majority of them are in favour of a compulsory reduction of the hours of labour, seeing that they are mostly the unskilled workers, one portion of whom work excessively long hours, while another portion starve for want of work altogether. But, as I said before, even if a majority of the workers were opposed to the shortening of the labour day, that would not be a conclusive argument against it. It is, of course, always desirable to have the consent to any scheme of all the parties whom that scheme will affect. It is always desirable, but it is not always necessary. The first question is, Is the scheme just? The second, Is it expedient? And when, as in the present case, it is both just and expedient, there is no room for further argument: the reform must be carried out forthwith, even although it is opposed by one or more of the parties that will be affected by it. If reformers were never to carry out any reforms until they had the assent of all who were to be benefited by them, they would never carry out any reforms at all. But there is an additional reason why the consent of the present workers to the shortening of the labour day is not absolutely necessary, and that is that they are not the parties principally concerned, not the persons whom the measure will principally affect. The persons whom it will principally affect, and on whose behalf, *primarily*, it is demanded, are the present unemployed. These a shortened labour day will benefit immensely and immediately, by finding them employment. That is its first and greatest object. The present workers it will also benefit by shortening their working day and increasing their wages. That is its second and lesser object. I do not belittle

this second object—far, very far, from it. It is great, very great. But it is not so great, nor anything like so urgent as the former—upon which, in fact, it is contingent, and without which it can never come to pass at all.

But it is obvious that, if a law was passed limiting the length of the labour day in Britain, and thereby increasing the cost of all British produced commodities, there would be a rush of cheaper foreign-produced commodities to cut out the British products, and the result would be that there would be no market at all, either at home or abroad, for either the goods of the British merchant or the labour of the British workman. It would, therefore, of course, be necessary to enact legislation preventing any such injustice. Having shortened the labour day for British workmen and British manufacturers to eight or nine hours, it would obviously be most unjust to admit to British markets foreign labour and produce on a different footing. To compel the British manufacturer to stop his machinery at the end of a daily eight hours' run, while we admitted to our markets foreign goods produced by a ten or twelve hours day, would be so preposterously absurd as to expose us to a roar of European laughter. The suggestion is, in fact, too ridiculous for serious discussion. Nobody proposes—at all events I do not propose—the shortening of the labour day *unless and until we can secure along with it the exclusion of all foreign labour that we can ourselves perform, and of all foreign products that we can ourselves produce.* To shorten the labour day while permitting the stream of destitute aliens to flow into the British labour market would be obviously futile: to shorten the labour day without at the same time excluding foreign products would be to commit national suicide. The three remedies are mutually and equally indispensable.

But, it will be said, this is Protection. Of course it is. Why not? Why should we not adopt Protection? The whole of the civilised world, including the younger and more progressive nations, has adopted it. Are we the only wise people on the earth, and will wisdom die with us? And why, of all men, should the workers of a highly civilised country like ours hesitate to adopt it? The alternative to Protection is the unlimited competition of not only European but Asiatic labour, the hundreds of millions of Indians and Chinamen, whose standard of living is much lower than that

of the British workman, and whose competition would infallibly destroy the British standard and bring it down towards their own. Are Englishmen and Scotsmen willing to accept that alternative rather than adopt Protection? I hardly think so. The middle-class supporters of the Manchester school of economics may for a season succeed in maintaining the present abundant supply of cheap labour by frightening the more impressionable and less intelligent portion of the British workmen with ghost stories of the evils of Protection in their grandmothers' time. But it will be only for a season. By-and-by the scales will fall from the eyes of the dupes, the real facts of the question will be perceived, and the Cobdenish delusions of the past finally discarded.

For what is Protection, this policy which the workers are commanded to abjure? and what is Free Trade, which they are entreated to retain? What is Free Trade? It is free exchange. But we have not got it. We have free imports, with slight exceptions, and taxed exports, with slight exceptions, and all the other nations and our own Colonies have, practically, protection. Free exchange, the absence of all obstacles to commercial intercourse is, no doubt, the ideal method of exchange from the consumer's point of view; for by it he would obtain his commodities at prices lower than would otherwise be possible. But, with a surplus in the general labour market, free trade is fatal to the producer. If the French silk manufacturer and the British coal-owner agreed to exchange their wares without the intervention of the customs officer, the result would of course be a saving of expense, tantamount to a reduction in the cost, the natural price, of these commodities. But who would be benefited by that, by the non-intervention of the customs officer? Not the sellers of the articles on either side, for the competition of their fellows would prevent them adding an imaginary duty to the cost; and certainly not the actual producers, the French silk weaver and the British collier, if there was, as now, a surplus in their respective labour markets, keeping their wages down to the subsistence point. The only persons who would benefit by the non-intervention of the customs officer would be the idle consumers of the two commodities on both sides of the Channel. These would obtain their commodities at a price lower by the amount of the customs officer's salary and expenses: that is the whole story of Free Trade.

What, on the other hand, is Protection? It is a system by which nations set up barriers at their ports and frontiers against the trade of other nations. The barriers take the form of duties, or taxes, levied on such trade, and are erected for two separate and distinct objects. In some cases the tax is levied for the sake of *r  venue* only; in others for the purpose of wholly or partially excluding from the country commodities which the country can, and wishes, to produce for itself. The effect of this tax, or customs duty, is, of course, to increase the market price of the commodities so taxed, and Protection is therefore as obnoxious to the idle consumer as Free Trade is acceptable. Again, it is true that the natural cost is not the price at which the commodity is always offered, some nations giving their exporters a bounty on some particular exports in order to prevent rival nations from establishing or preserving that particular industry. But, speaking generally, the consumer pays either the customs duties or their equivalent; the equivalent taking the form of higher prices—higher, that is, than he would have to pay if the duty did not exist. So it is quite clear that Free Trade is the ideal system of exchange so far as the consumer is concerned.

To the merchant who buys and sells, the manufacturer who produces and sells, the carrier and dealer, Free Trade is likewise preferable to Protection, being more conducive to the expansion of commerce. And to the manufacturer it is desirable that the Free Trade shall be universal, that he shall not be handicapped in the race by having markets closed against him that are open to his rivals. And if he cannot have general Free Trade, he would prefer, with all its waste and restrictions, general Protection. Whichever it is to be, he asks that it shall be equal all round, a fair field and no favour, so that every man shall obtain such results as his skill and energy deserve.

But to the worker, Free Trade is, and must be, most disadvantageous; for, under it, the product of his labour is subject to the competition of the whole world. And to the worker in highly civilised and prosperous communities like Great Britain, our own great Colonies and the United States of America, Free Trade is, or would be, specially disadvantageous, for the competition of the poorer and less civilised races of the earth would tend inevitably to lower his standard of living down to theirs. This fact is clearly

recognised on all hands. In South Africa at the present moment the importation of cheap Asiatic labour is hotly resented by the white workers there. The importation of Asiatic labour to work the gold mines of South Africa will infallibly lower the standard of living of the white workers, but it will be Free Trade. The exclusion of that labour would help to preserve that standard, but it would be rank Protection. A "white Australia" is the watchword of the workers in that country, and the organised Labour party there are resolute on the subject. But it is a flagrant violation of Free Trade and the very incarnation of Protection. At home, amongst ourselves, we see the fact recognised every day. In every trade union in the country the skilled workers object to their work being done by the unskilled. The bricklayer will not allow his labourer to lay a brick, and in other trades similar restrictions prevail. This action, of which I entirely approve, is not adopted in any spirit of hostility to the unskilled workman, but simply to prevent the fall in wages which would inevitably ensue, and which, after a time, would reach the labourer as well as the skilled workman. But to permit the labourer to do skilled work would be Free Trade, and to deny him that permission is rank Protection; yet the permission is refused in every trade union in the three kingdoms. In a word, trade unionism *is* Protection, as every candid and intelligent thinker must acknowledge.

There is one argument that is frequently put forward by the opponents of Protection which I may, perhaps, conveniently answer at this point. It is to the effect that Protection would be particularly hurtful to the workers, in that it would increase the price of their commodities without correspondingly increasing their wages. The answer is that, while the first part of that statement is undoubtedly true, the second is entirely false. The price of the workers' commodities would most certainly be increased, and the wages of the workers would just as certainly be correspondingly increased also. Indeed, it could not be otherwise, however ardently the employing classes might desire to make it so. For the worker at present receives only a subsistence wage, and he must continue to receive that subsistence wage, if he is to continue a worker, whatever the cost of the commodities necessary to his subsistence may be.

That the average wage of the free worker in modern industrial

society is, and must be, based on the cost of subsistence is generally recognised by all economists. Marx's demonstration of the fact is perhaps the most perfect, but Adam Smith and others are not less emphatic. "The value of labour power," says Marx, "resolves itself into the value of a definite quantity of the means of subsistence. The minimum limit of the value of labour power is determined by the value of the commodities without which the labourer cannot renew his vital energy, of those means of subsistence that are physically indispensable." Marx quotes, with approval, Sir Wm. Petty, who says, "the value of his (the labourer's) average daily wages is determined by what he requires so as to live, labour, and generate." "The labourer," continues Marx, "supplies himself with necessaries in order to maintain his labour power, just as coal and water are supplied to the steam engine, and oil to the wheel. The fact that the labourer consumes his means of subsistence for his own purposes, and not to please his employer, has no bearing on the matter. The consumption of food by a beast of burden is none the less a necessary factor in the process of production because the beast enjoys what he eats." "The wages of labour," says Adam Smith, "are everywhere regulated partly by demand and partly by the average price of the necessary articles of subsistence." "The habits and requirements of the labourer," says John Stuart Mill, "determine his real wages." "The price of labour," says Ricardo, "is determined by the price of the commodities necessary for the support of the labourer." To these authoritative pronouncements I would add that the subsistence standard that governs each worker's wage is not even his own standard, but is that of the unemployed man standing idle in the labour market ready to take his place. For example, if I were to fight for and obtain employment as a dock labourer, the foreman would not pay me a wage based on my subsistence standard, but would pay me a wage on the subsistence standard of the average docker whose position I occupied.

There is another argument sometimes advanced against the theory of a subsistence wage which may be answered here. Men who have risen from the ranks of the workers, who have saved money, and themselves become capitalists, point to their own case as conclusive evidence against it. But the argument will not hold. There are several reasons, any one of which is sufficient to account

for that result. The man who has risen may have possessed exceptional powers of mind or body. In that case his labour passed into a higher category, a category in which the subsistence standard of the workers was higher than that he originally was used to, and which, therefore, left him a margin to save. Or, in the second place, he may have been exceptionally industrious, working after the average man had left off; or exceptionally abstemious, denying himself things which the average man considers necessities; or exceptionally healthy or exceptionally free from family or other dependents. The wages of labour are necessarily based on the ascertained requirements of the average workman, who *will* drink and smoke and marry and beget children; and that is why there is a margin for the teetotaler, the non-smoker, the bachelor, and the miser.

This law of the subsistence wage, emphatically laid down by the great Free Trade economist, Adam Smith, is strangely overlooked by his professed disciples; and when Mr. Chamberlain says that higher wages will accompany the increased price of food and other commodities necessary to the workers, his statement is jeered at as a self-evident absurdity. "I want to know," cried one of the newest of the Labour members of Parliament at a public meeting the other day, "how paying more for his food will benefit the working man"; and the ignorant jibe is to be found in almost every Free Trade harangue. Some go even further, and declare, not only that wages will not rise with the increase in the price of commodities, but that they will fall, both relatively and absolutely. Let me, to these, again quote Adam Smith:

As the wages of labour are everywhere regulated partly by demand for it, and partly by the average price of the necessary articles of subsistence, whatever raises this average price must necessarily raise those wages, so that the labourer may still be able to purchase that quantity of those necessary articles which he requires. A tax upon those articles of subsistence necessarily raises their price. Such a tax must therefore occasion a rise in the wages of labour proportionate to this rise of price. The labourer, though he may pay the tax out of his hand, cannot, for any considerable time at least, be properly said even to advance it. It must always in the long run be advanced to him by his immediate employer in the advanced rate of wages. Taxes upon necessities, so far as they affect the labouring poor, are finally paid partly by landlords in the diminished rent of their lands, and partly by rich consumers, whether landlords or

others, in the advanced price of manufactured goods. The middling and superior ranks of people, if they understood their own interest, ought always to oppose all taxes upon the necessities of life as well as all direct taxes upon wages of labour, for the final payment of both one and the other falls altogether upon themselves.

And Stuart Mill, in his *Political Economy*, says, "A tax on necessities is equivalent to a tax on profits." The opponents of Protection pretend to be political economists and loudly protest that their opposition is based upon the "principles of that science, and is maintained in the interests of the working class. Well, here are the formal pronouncements of the recognised exponents, the veritable high priests, of Free Trade doctrine, and these declare unanimously that taxes on food—the feature of Protection specially selected for denunciation by Liberal politicians—are not borne by the workers at all, but are borne by the upper and middle classes.

The adoption of the policy I advocate—Protection *plus* a limited labour day—would, of course, involve the abandonment of much, if not all, of our export trade. That goes without saying. Even at present our products, handicapped by the cheaper labour and protective tariffs of other countries, find difficult sale in foreign markets. Under the conditions that I propose, with the wages of the producers immensely increased, these products could not, except in rare cases and particular articles, enter the foreign market at all. It follows, also, that whatever there may be, either in the form of profit or in the form of *prestige*, accruing to us from our export trade, that that profit and that prestige must be definitely relinquished. That great fact must be clearly recognised. All the stock exhortations addressed to the workers, by the politicians on both sides, to apply themselves to technical education and to cultivate habits of greater thrift and industrial efficiency, are only so many ignorant or conscious insults. Why should the worker trouble to make himself a more profitable instrument or victim of exploitation? And if he did try, so as to enable his masters to retain the foreign trade, what chance is there that he would succeed? Is not technical education open to the foreign workman as well as to him, and is not that foreign workman already thrifty to the point of privation? And as to opening up "fresh markets"—another will-o'-the-

wisp held up to him by trading politicians—where is a market to be found into which, thanks to our Free Trade policy, we shall not be followed, and out of which we shall not be hunted, by the cheaper products of our Continental rivals? The workers of all countries are but pawns in this game, played one against the other. And, as we have seen, the British worker, even if he continued to submit himself to sacrifice, could not, with our Free Trade system, win the game for his masters. If that system were abolished and he consented to lower his standard of living to that of his foreign fellow, he *might* win the game for his masters: without these the task is impossible. It is clear then, that, even if it were possible—which it is not—for this country to increase or even to retain its present export trade, the task would require the continued sacrifice of the British worker as a pawn in the game, a proceeding obviously incompatible with any improvement in his economic condition, or even with its maintenance at its present level.

If it were necessary to offer any consolation to the British workman for the loss of our export trade, it would be found, ample and overflowing, in the recovery, for ourselves, of the whole of our home market. This recovery would, of course, immediately follow the exclusion of foreign products, and the market thus recovered would be found much larger and much more profitable than that for which it had been exchanged. That it would be found, even at first, much larger, is proved by the admitted fact that our imports are much greater than our exports; that we buy from the foreigner about twice what we sell to him. I know, of course, that the so-called free traders contest the fact, asserting that, as goods are paid for only with goods, therefore we must send more goods than are recorded, although, they admit, they cannot show them. A little learning is a dangerous thing, and often causes its possessors to betray an ignorance that is anything but little. The astounding blunder of these “free trade” dogmatists owes its origin to the fact that they have only looked at present phenomena; they have not looked at anything beyond the day in which they happen to live. It is quite true, as they say, that goods are paid for only by goods, but it is not true that the goods are simultaneously exchanged. This is where they have blundered. The excess goods that we are now receiving from foreign countries—that is to say, the excess over the goods we are

now sending—are paid for by goods *now being produced in these foreign countries, which goods are paid for by the interest on investments in the trade of these countries, and which investments were purchased by goods exported from this country to these countries in the time of our grandfathers, many years ago, when Great Britain was the workshop of the world and her exports exceeded her imports in the same ratio as her imports now exceed her exports.* In other words, our grandfathers, many years ago, paid for these excess goods that we are now consuming. We, ourselves, are not paying for them and never will pay for them in any shape or form.

Again it is said that a great portion of the difference between the amounts of our imports and exports is accounted for in the cost of carriage both ways. That is quite true. A pound's worth of goods on board a British ship in a British port is worth a guinea at the port of debarkation at the other side of the world. And the guinea's worth of goods that is bought with it and despatched home is worth 22s. when it reaches its destination. And thus, while the actual values are the same, the record shows a difference of 2s. : exports, 20s. ; imports, 22s. All that is quite true and self-evident, but, at most, the amount thus accounted for is but a fraction of the difference between the amounts of our imports and exports. And when our opponents proceed to claim consideration for "the great industry of British shipping," we must remember that the so-called British shipping is not British at all, but is, in fact, substantially foreign. The ships themselves are, it is true, mostly built in England, but the shareholders in the shipbuilding company are often foreigners, the metals of which the ships are made are imported from abroad, the shipyards are full of cheap foreign labour, the crews are often foreigners to a man, as are also the buyers and sellers of the cargoes. The "great industry of British shipping" has not much claim on the consideration of the British workman.

In exchanging the foreign market for his own home market; or, rather, for that portion of his home market now taken by the foreigner, the British workman will make a good bargain for himself. He will give up a market doing a trade roundly estimated at £300,000,000, and enter into possession of one doing a trade of £600,000,000. Nor is this all. The trade he relinquishes is pre-

carious and subject to competition so keen that profits are very small; the trade he resumes is not only secure from competition, but is double the size and capable of great expansion. How great that expansion will be it is impossible to foretell; but when we remember Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's 13,000,000 now on the verge of hunger, and think of the commodities that they require (and that they will purchase when they find well-paid employment), we can see that the expansion will be very great indeed. The enormous increase in our home trade which would immediately follow the enrichment of our own working class cannot, as I say, be foretold with exactness: it can only be conjectured; but it would be a very moderate estimate indeed to put it at three or four times as much as our present export trade altogether. In the satisfaction of this increased demand, British manufacturers and merchants would find ample compensation for any loss of foreign trade that they might experience, and British workmen find increased and more profitable demand for their labour.

A great question now arises. What about the Empire? Is preferential trade with our Colonies necessary for the consolidation of the Empire, and how can that preferential trade be carried out if we exclude all foreign products? I answer that I believe, as firmly as does Mr. Chamberlain, that preferential trade with our Colonies is necessary for the consolidation of our Empire, and that I will show how that trade can be fully carried out under the policy that I advocate in these pages. In advocating the exclusion of foreign products, I always add the words, "that we can ourselves produce." This is a great qualification, and leaves the door wide open for Colonial preference. There are many things, such as wines, tea, cotton, tobacco, etc., that we require but cannot ourselves produce, while there are others, such as corn, that we cannot at present produce in sufficient quantity to supply our needs. These we must buy in whole or in part from somebody, and I advise that they be bought, as far as possible, from our Colonial brothers and not from the foreigner. Of course there may be some of these things, or portions of them, that our Colonies cannot supply, cotton and corn for example. In which cases we must also, of course, buy them from the foreigner, as we do at present, under Free Trade conditions and as cheaply as may be. In return for the preference given them, the Colonies, I am

certain, would make corresponding concessions, admitting at a tariff much lower than that imposed upon the foreigner, such goods as we sent them in exchange. That they would do so is proved by the fact that they have already made such concessions in our favour although we have made none in theirs. I do not say, I do not imagine for a moment, that they will stop or delay, for our sakes, the development of their own industries. That they will not do; that it would be unreasonable to expect them to do; that they do not ask us, on our side, to do. All that they ask, all that I propose, is that each party should, as far as possible, supply its own wants and buy its deficiencies from each other—as far as they can supply them—instead of from the common enemy, the foreigner. That such an arrangement would be mutually advantageous cannot be denied; that it would help to weld the Empire together is self-evident; and that it could be easily and amicably arrived at is only questioned by those who are, in their hearts, opposed to its realisation.

There is the question of the alien immigrant, the foreign workman. His exclusion, his total exclusion, from the British labour market is essential to the economic emancipation of the British worker, but the British workman himself is very reluctant to exclude him. Amongst the working men of this country, especially amongst those of them who are “advanced” politicians, there is much sympathy for the working men of other lands. This sympathy is aroused chiefly by the political hardships endured by these workers of other lands, but it covers the economic question also. The British workman’s first conception of his foreign brother is a political refugee, and when that brother begins to assume the form of an economic competitor, the British workman, in many cases, still clings to his fraternal ideal, and refuses to recognise hard facts. He is quite willing, nay, desirous, to improve his own economic condition and the economic condition of his fellow-countrymen, but he insists on effecting the economic emancipation of the workers of all lands at one and the same time, and looks coldly, sometimes hostilely, on measures of a merely national scope. This sentiment is very creditable to the British workman’s heart, if not to his head, and I, for one, will not disparage it. I yield to no man in devotion to the cosmopolitan idea. I was a member, thirty years ago, of the governing body, the General

Council, of the International Working Men's Association, and fortune can never bestow on me an honour that I shall more highly prize. But I have learned since then that the economic emancipation of the whole of the workers of the world cannot be achieved at one and the same time; that the task must be accomplished in sections, nation by nation, on the principle of water-tight compartments. One nation first must be made water-proof, then another and another, until all are included. It can only be done by legislation: strikes and barricades are not practical politics, and as it can only be done by legislation, it can only be done in countries like ours, where the workers can dominate the legislature. The British workers can decree an eight hours labour day, but only for their own country. They can only legislate for themselves; they cannot touch the labour markets of Germany, France, Holland, and Belgium. The workers of these countries must, in turn, legislate for themselves. By all means let the workers of all countries help each other, if they can and as far as they can, in securing the control of the legislature, each in their own country. But, at the same time, let it be recognised that the legislative method is the only method, and then it will be seen that each country must legislate for itself separately, and that the legislation must take the form of the exclusion of all external labour. Otherwise, the labour market of each country would be flooded with the surplus labour of other countries, and the capitalists of all countries enabled to retain their hold upon the workers of all countries.

In this matter of alien immigration no country in Europe is so seriously injured as our own. The Briton of to-day is like unto a man born to a goodly estate, but whose rich preserves are rifled by trespassing strangers and whose fruitful fields are ravaged by wild vermin. His country is the envy of the world, and all men flock to it. Its temperate climate, its ordered laws, its settled institutions, its guarded liberty, make Britain the desired of nations. Nowhere else on the surface of the globe does the light of life burn so steadily: nowhere is man so safe or property so secure.

These facts, even if they stood alone, would suffice to explain the steady flow to our shores of many of the inhabitants of Continental nations. They would appeal powerfully to the wealthier and more high-spirited natives of these countries, and cause them

to seek in Britain the liberty and security denied them in their own land. But these wealthier immigrants are comparatively few in number—the merest handful—when contrasted with the great multitude of their poorer fellow-countrymen who also flock to Britain; and the reasons which explain the presence in our midst of the wealthy foreigner—namely, that Britain is a safe and pleasant place in which to enjoy wealth—do not account for the presence of the foreign starveling who has no wealth to enjoy. What, then, is the attraction that draws the starving foreigner to our shores? Simply this, that, while Britain is undoubtedly a place where riches can be safely and pleasantly enjoyed, it is also a place where riches can be acquired. The very fact that great numbers of wealthy men gather there is in itself a guarantee that much labour of some kind will be in demand, and those who are willing to perform that labour for the lowest reward, and under the meanest conditions, are assured of a subsistence at least. Beyond this circumstance of the presence of wealthy residents there is the great fact that Britain is still, to a large extent, the workshop and market of the world, where work comes to be done and where, consequently, rewards are to be obtained; and the poverty-stricken natives of Continental countries, hearing of this wonderful labour market and its boundless possibilities, sell everything they have and beg, borrow, or steal, if haply they can thereby raise their passage money to Britain.

Now, I do not pretend for a moment to say that the pauper alien is an absolute and unmixed evil. That would be foolishness. If the pauper alien were an absolute and unmixed evil, he would not be tolerated for forty-eight hours. As a matter of fact, he is an absolute and unmixed evil to one section of the community only, the working class. To the other sections of the community, the capitalists, the employers of labour, the middle-men, and the idle non-producing consumers, he is a positive advantage. This is the reason why all efforts to stop the influx of pauper aliens into this country is resisted by these last-named classes. The whole community is, in economic matters, divided into two sections, and two sections only—namely, (*a*) the producing consumers and (*b*) the non-producing consumers. For the sake of convenience and brevity we are in the habit of calling section (*a*) producers and section (*b*) consumers, although both are, of course, consumers.

These names are used for the purpose of distinction only, and are not intended, as is sometimes alleged, to conceal or slur over the fact that producers are also consumers. Furthermore, it is certainly not denied that others besides those generally spoken of as the "working class" must be included amongst the producers. The captain of an Atlantic liner is as much entitled to be called a working-man as the oldest hand or newest apprentice on board his ship. The secretary of a railway company often works harder every day than many of the men to whom he pays weekly wages, and his work is quite as necessary. All, in fact, high or low, who do useful work are, in the economic (although possibly not in the literal) sense, producers. It is only those who do no useful work that are described as consumers. Finally there are many men who, in the language of the theatre, double the parts—that is to say, they are both producers and consumers, in the economic sense, at one and the same time. Thus, the owner of a business may work in that business as manager, book-keeper, traveller, what not. In his capacity of worker, even although the business is his own, he is a producer; but in his capacity of employer, the receiver of profit from the labour of others, he is a consumer. These are distinctions that must be clearly recognised and constantly remembered, if the reader would understand this deep yet simple question.

Now, the material interests of these two sections of the community, the producers and the consumers, are naturally and inevitably antagonistic to each other. It is to the interest of the consumer that the commodities he wants to buy shall be cheap; it is to the interest of the producer that the commodity he wants to sell shall be dear. It is true that it would be to the immediate interest of each individual producer to have all commodities *other than that he himself produces* cheap. Thus, the baker would like flour to be cheap and loaves dear; the miller would like loaves to be cheap and flour dear. The shoemaker would like leather to be cheap and boots dear; the tanner would like boots to be cheap and leather dear. And baker, miller, tanner, and shoemaker would all unite in wishing every commodity except bread, flour, leather, and boots to be as cheap as possible. But a little reflection will show the baker, the miller, the tanner, and the shoemaker that their wish—apart from its child like selfishness—is impossible of per-

manent realisation ; for if any particular industries, four or forty or four hundred, were exceptionally remunerated, the workers in the other industries would immediately flock towards these exceptionally remunerated industries, and the inequality between them and all other industries would soon be levelled down and obliterated. All the workers are, in fact, economically chained together. They must, as a class, stand together or fall together. They cannot, in the general struggle, separate themselves one trade from another. And so, being true in each trade, it is true in all that it is to the interest of the producer that all commodities shall be dear. This is so self-evident that one would naturally expect everyone to agree with it. But, absurd as it may seem, it is the case that there are some persons who, while admitting that it is to the interest of the idle non-producing consumers that commodities should be cheap, obstinately deny that it is to the interest of the producers that commodities should be dear. A very short and simple demonstration should put these unreasoning objectors to silence. Thus, if it is to the interest of the consumer that commodities should be cheap (as these objectors themselves admit), it follows that it will be to the detriment, or loss, of the consumer if commodities be made dear. Why? Because he will have to pay more for his daily necessary commodities? Exactly. Agreed. But where goes the excess thus paid? It does not disappear in the bowels of the earth; it does not disperse in vapour. Where, then, does it go? It must find its way, directly or indirectly, into the pockets of the producers, for there is no third party in the community—all are either producers or consumers. It is evident, therefore, not only that it is to the interest of the consumers that commodities shall be cheap, and to the interest of the producers that commodities shall be dear, but also that the measure of the consumer's loss is the measure of the producer's gain and *vice versâ*, as the case may be.

And it is here that the pauper alien enters and plays his part. The British workman has a certain standard of living—Heaven knows, not a very high one!—and he demurs to getting under it. He knows that the highest wage he asks will leave a wide margin between that wage and the intrinsic value of his labour; and he asks Society and his employer, although not perhaps in the text of Scripture, not to muzzle the ox that treads out the corn. But

Society and the employer do not conduct business on these lines. The Word of God is right enough in church on Sundays, and even on week-days its precepts may be applied to one's cattle; but in the market-place, and when dealing with mankind, the only law known to man is the law of supply and demand. And here stands the pauper alien, free from any notions about standards of living—of decent food, of adequate clothing, of a second room—ready and eager to do the work required, and to do it for less than half the wage asked by the Englishman and Scotsman. Is it any wonder that, under all the circumstances, Society and the employer engage the pauper alien and let the Scotsman and Englishman go? Rather should we not call them incomprehensible fools if they did anything else?

It may be said that Society and the employer, by importing and using these destitute foreigners, are laying the foundations of the ruin of the British people, of the destruction of Britain's supremacy amongst the nations, and even of Britain as a great Power. But what is that to them? Their horizon is bounded by their own individual interests and the probable term of their own individual lives, and if the system will last out their time that is all they care about. After them the deluge. Everyone for himself and the Devil take the hindmost. Well, it is no use calling names. Society and the employer will only smile at our denunciations and go to the play (and church on Sunday) as usual. And as for the pauper alien himself, the poor wretch, vile and odious as he may be, is more to be pitied than blamed. He is the creature of the circumstances by which he is surrounded, and, in some cases at least, it is probable that it is his poverty and not his will that consents to his crime. It is easy, as Becky Sharp said, to be virtuous on ten thousand a year; but if some of us were in the pauper alien's position we should possibly do as he does, for life is very sweet, even to a starving man. What is wanted is not words, but actions: actions that will make it impossible for the foreigner to undersell the British workman, and that will remove from Society and the employer the temptation of making the purchase.

Although, as we have seen, it is the workers who are the first and greatest sufferers by the invasion of the starving foreigner, it must not be forgotten that there are certain very important rela-

tions in which that starving foreigner is also a source of evil to the general community and an element of danger to the State itself. There is, for example, the question of the public health—health of body and health of mind. And it is admitted—the matter is not a subject of controversy at all—that the destitute foreign immigrant is, as a rule, diseased in both mind and body. There may be a few partial exceptions to the rule—in the case, for example, of children or very young persons—but the rule itself holds good. And here one really might stop and claim that the argument was completed ; for if it is admitted, as it is admitted, that these poor wretches are diseased, surely it is the duty of the authorities to exclude them from the community. By what logic can we reconcile the shutting out of diseased food and the admission of diseased immigrants, the destruction of our own diseased cattle and the importation of diseased foreigners ? Is it the number of legs that makes the difference ? It would almost seem so ; for on no other hypothesis can one explain why diseased bipeds are freely admitted to all the intercourse of British industrial and social life, while quadrupeds much less diseased are consigned to a grave of quicklime. Nor must our well-to-do classes imagine themselves secure from the disease-infection imparted by the pauper aliens. It is quite true that these unhappy creatures arrive first in the East-end of London, and that, for the most part, they remain there. But the occupations to which they attach themselves are chiefly tailoring and shoemaking, the products of which are, one might say, specially adapted for the communication of disease from the maker to the user. I am myself not much of a Royalist, and do not regard the life of a prince as necessarily more valuable than the life of a pauper. But the majority of my countrymen, especially those blessed with wealth and station, hold a contrary view, and it is to them that I address this argument, and remind them of the story that is told of the late Duke of Clarence having contracted his fatal illness through wearing a disease-infected garment, a garment that had, the night before it was sent home, been used to cover a child in the last stage of typhoid fever. It is not often that the punishment of our indifference to the welfare of our less fortunate fellow-creatures is brought home to us so dramatically as in the death of Prince Albert Victor, but that it does reach us, one way or another, even in this life, cannot be doubted. Self-protection,

therefore, if nothing else, should impel us to exclude from our community such radiating centres of loathsome and dangerous diseases as these unhappy pauper aliens are proved to be.

There is another relation in which the destitute foreigner proves himself a most objectionable character, and that is his relation to the State. Besides being a physical plague-spot, the destitute foreigner is usually a bad citizen, a breaker or evader of the law, a sedition-monger, and, in the last resort, an open enemy of this country. These traits of character have their roots in the fact that he *is* a foreigner and that he is destitute. Our laws are, I frankly admit, made chiefly for the protection of property. It is no wonder, therefore, that they are not beloved by those who have no property to protect, and who, moreover, believe, rightly or wrongly, as do most of these destitute foreigners, that it is propertied and law-protected Society that is chiefly responsible for their destitute condition. Their alien blood must also be taken into account, and the fact recognised that it would be contrary to human nature if these men, Germans or Russians, or whatever they may be, did not, when international questions arose, take sides with their native land and against Great Britain. Blood is thicker than water, even with pauper aliens. Nor is the danger an imaginary one, for international questions are constantly arising and the anti-British sentiment of the foreigners amongst us is not the least of the difficulties with which the responsible British statesmen of the day have to grapple.

But great as are all the evils brought upon the State and the general community by the pauper alien, they are as nothing when compared with the ruin that he inflicts upon the British working class. The pauper alien is imported direct into the British labour market, into the weakest and most vulnerable spot in that market — namely, in the East-end of London. And there is no room for doubt as to what his action will be when he gets there. His absolute destitution leaves him no choice but to sell his labour at once, and to sell it for whatever it will bring. His feelings may be of the finest and his reluctance to undersell his fellow-workmen may be extreme, but his poverty compels him to accept, to thankfully accept, whatever is offered him. He is not a free agent: his urgent necessities control the situation. What follows? Simply this, that he is engaged, at less than half the wage, to do

work which has hitherto been done by Scotsman and Englishman, and that the Scotsman and Englishman are notified that, after Saturday next, their services will not be required. That is all. There is no fault found with the Briton, nor with his work. The work, in fact, is acknowledged to be the best that can be got. But the competition in prices is keen, the labour of the pauper alien is cheaper than the Briton's, and therefore the Briton must go and the pauper alien take his place. That is all.

With the loss of his employment, the last stage of the British workman's struggle for life usually begins. At first he tries to get employment elsewhere, but finds every avenue closed. Especially is this the case if he has the misfortune to have reached middle life.* Presently, to keep the wolf from the door, the little household gods begin to go, one after another, with ever-quickenings pace. Then the wife's and children's clothing, then the man's, and, finally, the landlord's patience being exhausted, it is the street, the workhouse, the prison, or the river. That this is a true picture of what is taking place in hundreds of cases in the East-end of London every day—yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow—will not be denied by anyone conversant with the life of the poor. Read the speeches of the shoemakers' delegates at recent Trade-Union Congresses, men who are staunch recognised Radicals in politics and cosmopolitan in their working-class sympathies. These speeches lay bare the terrible results to London workmen of pauper-alien immigration, and Congress itself, by large and repeated majorities, majorities of delegates present and majorities of men represented, passes resolutions calling for the legal and immediate prohibition of that immigration. These resolutions of successive Trade-Union Congresses lift the question out of the sphere of Party politics and place it on the high ground of national and working-class well-being.

It is clear, then, that the importation of destitute foreigners into this country is fraught with ruin to our working classes, with injury to the health of the community, and with danger to the State. And, these things being proved, it follows naturally that preventive legislation in respect of them is the immediate duty of

* A millionaire Liberal M.P., himself an alien, who has made his millions out of the labour of British workmen, recently announced his intention to reject all applicants for work who were over 30 years of age.

the Government. The preventive legislation need only be of the simplest character, making two requirements and two requirements only—namely, a clean bill of health and such moderate means on the part of the immigrant as would save him from the necessity of underselling his British fellow-workman. Of course, care would have to be taken to exempt political refugees from the operation of the measure, but that goes without saying.

The opponents of a shorter labour day next declare that the proposed remedy would be ineffective, inasmuch as, even if an Eight Hours Day were established to-morrow, and the surplus labour in the market thereby absorbed, in a few years' time, in consequence of increase of population and of improved productive appliances, the evil would have returned as great as ever.

The answer to that is, of course, that the labour day must be shortened or lengthened from time to time, keeping strict pace with the increase or decrease of the numbers of the workers, the increase or decrease of improved productive appliances, and the increase or decrease of the effective demand of the market. The law of the labour day would, like the Budget or Army Estimates, naturally come before the legislature annually, and it would be the simple duty of Parliament to shorten or lengthen the labour day in accordance with the returns of the day relating to the labour market, in the same way that it increases or diminishes the estimates for the coming year in accordance with estimated expenditure. If there was a 10 per cent. deficiency of labour, the legislature would decree a 10 per cent. extension of the labour day. And if there was a 10 per cent. superfluity of labour, then it would decree a 10 per cent. shortening of the labour day. How the deficiency or superfluity had been brought about would be immaterial. Whether from increase or decrease of the numbers of the workers, the increase or decrease of productive appliances, increase or decrease of effective demand—these would not affect the question. The only point to be considered would be the *fact* of a deficiency or superfluity (as the case might be) of labour in the market, and the only task to adjust the supply to the demand.

It may be said that this compulsory absorption of the surplus in the labour market would operate injuriously against labour-saving inventions, inasmuch as they would then be much less valuable, *commercially*, than they are at present. But that is a

mistake. At present, labour-saving inventions are *wage*-saving inventions, and it is this latter quality that gives them their present immense commercial value. At present, a new machine—like, for example, the Linotype—that will enable ten men to do the work that now requires twenty, is worth ten men's wages, and will continue to be worth ten men's wages, as long as it lasts. It is therefore well worth buying. The employer buys it from the inventor, puts it into use, discharges the ten men, and putting what would have been their wages into his pocket (deducting the cost of the machine), soon amasses a fortune, while his discharged workmen find their way to the workhouse or the cemetery. That is what happens now, and that is what (excepting the fate of the workers) would substantially happen, even if the labour day were shortened. The invention of the Linotype machine, while absolutely revolutionising economic conditions in the composing department of the printing trade, would have only an infinitesimal effect on the *general* industries of the country, of which not one in a hundred would have, in any year, a similar invention to record. The result would be that, in the event of the labour day being further shortened, to absorb the men thrown out of employment by the invention of the Linotype and other machines, only a very small proportion of that burden, probably not 1 per cent., would fall on the composing branch of the printing trade. It is therefore evident that the commercial value of the invention would be practically as great as ever. It would still fetch as high a price to its author, and would still fill its purchaser's pocket with saved wages. But both its cost and its advantages would then be shared by all industries instead of, as at present, only the particular industry to which it applies.

All the others being disposed of, we now come to the final objection, which takes the three-fold form that, in the first place, a law which would increase the price of commodities and thereby the cost of living, would be unjust to the great class of consumers; that, in the second place, those consumers, in some cases could not, in others would not, continue to consume as much as formerly; and that, in the third place, this diminution of consumption would injuriously affect the produce market, leaving the manufacturer and merchant short of trade and the workman short of employment.

This—the interest of the consumer—is the great argument of Cobden Club economists, and is generally held to be conclusive. The nation, it is urged, is made up of different sections, classes, and occupations, each having its own sectional and separate interest. But all are consumers, and, the whole being greater than the part, the interests of the consumers, as consumers, must be preferred before all others. The proposition is, on its face, unimpeachable: but a little examination into the heart of the question shows that it rests on a complete fallacy. The fallacy is the assumption that all consumers are *equally* interested in consumers' interests. As a matter of fact, all consumers are *not* equally interested in consumers' interests. The consumers form two great divisions: firstly, those who are consumers only, and, secondly, those who are producers also. The members of the first of these divisions are naturally averse to any proposal—such as the shortening of the labour day—that will increase wages and thereby raise the price of produce. As non-producers (and therefore non-wage-receivers), they will have no share in the increased wages that will cause the price to rise, while, as consumers, they will have to pay the increased price. Obviously it is to their interest that prices should be kept down as low as possible. That is self-evident. But it does not therefore follow that prices *ought* to be so kept down. There are other parties to the transaction, and justice must be done between them. These other parties are the producers, and justice requires that the price the consumer shall pay to the producer shall be the whole value of the product. This is only just, nor can it be said to bear harshly on the idle consumer. If the idle consumer is blessed with such a measure of wealth as enables him, by successive disbursements from his hoard, to buy the labour, or the produce of the labour, of others, even at its full value, without himself labouring, then happy is he amongst men, and the least he can do is to be silent and content. And if his wealth falls short of the amount necessary to enable him to live entirely idle, and he must needs do some little work to make up the deficiency, still is he blessed above the great mass of his fellow-creatures whose only wealth is the labour of their hands from day to day.

So much for the consumer who is a consumer only and not a producer. As to the other consumer, he who is also a producer

and whom I therefore describe as a producing consumer, his case is wholly different. And here I would point out a fact which is strangely overlooked by most economists, but which is the very root of the whole matter. The argument has been already partly expounded, but I will repeat and amplify it. It is as follows :—The consumer who is also a producer has two capacities—that of a producer, and that of a consumer. These capacities are not only distinct and separate: they are essentially antagonistic to each other. They are antagonistic to each other because it is to their possessor's interest as a producer that the prices of products shall be high, so as to afford him high wages; while, as a consumer, it is to his interest that prices shall be low, so as to enable him to obtain his commodities for a small outlay of those wages. This fact, this junction in one person of mutually antagonistic and unequal interests, is, I repeat, the very root of the whole matter; and the incapacity to perceive it is the cause of the confusion as to the relative importance of producers' and consumers' interests that so generally prevails. Confronted with this problem, this conflict of interests in his own exchequer, it becomes necessary for the producer to ascertain which set of interests are most important to him, in order that he may promote them in preference to the others. The common view put forward by all Cobden Club writers is that the consumers' interests are all-paramount. But this is an error, so far as the producer is concerned. His interests as a producer greatly outweigh his interests as a consumer, as can be readily demonstrated.

I have already pointed out that the great bulk of the commodities, the prices of which would be raised by the establishment of a shorter labour day, are not consumed by the workers at all, but by the non-producing consumers. Of course, I am speaking here of values—the proper method of measurement—not mere quantities. The fact is proved thus :—If we suppose that the wage-receiving workers spent the whole of their income, saving nothing, that would be, as shown earlier, only £390,000,000 annually. That, therefore, is the outside measure of their present possible consumption. If the other classes did the same, that is, spent the whole of their income, their consumption would be £1,610,000,000, that being the amount of their income, as shown on the same page. But, giving these other classes the benefit of the assumption that

they save one-fourth of *their* income—a large concession—they still stand debited with an annual consumption of the value of over £1,200,000,000, or three-fourths of the whole. And, that being so, it is evident that the burden of increased prices would be borne to the extent of three-fourths by the non-producing classes, the working class bearing one-fourth only. The result, therefore, would be that while the worker would receive, in his wages, the whole of the increase of the prices of commodities, he would pay, in buying his commodities, one-fourth of that amount back again, leaving him a net balance to the good of three-fourths of the total increase. The demonstration is complete and there is no escape from its conclusions. But let us simplify it by an easy illustration. A workman, say a baker, is in receipt of a weekly wage of 25s. This, as we have previously seen, is the present average wage of the adult male worker throughout the three kingdoms. And the amount of value this baker produces for this 25s. is, as we have also seen, £4 16s. 8d. Now let us suppose that this £4 16s. 8d. takes the form of 193 quartern loaves, value sixpence each, which the baker turns out each week. We have already assumed that the baker spends the whole of his wages every week, saving nothing, and, for convenience of illustration, let us put all his commodities in the form of the loaves he himself produces. It gives us this result:—193 loaves, value sixpence each, total value £4 16s. 6d., produced for a wage of 25s., with which 25s. the baker buys back for his own sustenance, 50 loaves. Now comes the change.

By the shortening of the labour day and the consequent scarcity of labour, the baker is able, we will suppose, to obtain an increase in his wage of 100 per cent., bringing it up to 50s. per week. And in order to cover this increase in the cost of production, amounting to 25s. on 193 loaves, the master baker puts $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. on each 6d. loaf, thus raising its price to $7\frac{1}{2}$ d. and the total increase on the 193 loaves to 24s. 1½d., or $10\frac{1}{2}$ d. less than the increase in the workman's wage. Now, what is the result? The result, so far as the workman is concerned, is—that he now, buying the same commodities as before, has to pay 31s. 3d. for his 50 loaves instead of 25s. as previously, but that, on the other hand, he receives 25s. more as wages, leaving him a net weekly balance to the good of 18s. 9d. The

demonstration, as I said before, is complete, and there is no escape from its conclusions.*

With regard to the statement that, if the labour day were shortened and the prices of commodities raised, some consumers could not, and others would not, consume as much as formerly, and that, therefore, there would be so much less trade for our merchants and so much less employment for our workmen—the answer is that the statement is both true and false. It is true in its first part and false in its second. There undoubtedly would be some consumers—idle consumers—who would not, after the shortening of the labour day, consume as much as formerly. That is, in fact, one of the objects of the proposed change. It is not intended that those idle consumers shall continue to consume as much as formerly. It is intended that they shall consume less and work more. And it is undoubtedly contemplated, by shortening the labour day to the point that there will be no unemployed workmen in the labour market, that the stage will ultimately be reached when the idle consumer will have ceased to be and all consumers will be workers. Of course, it is not expected that that stage will be reached to-morrow, nor the day after, for many of the idle consumers are possessed of so much realised and realisable wealth that they will be able to go on for a considerable time paying out portions of that wealth in return for the labour they require. But that process will come to an end in time, and, when the end does come, the whilom idle consumer, having spent his last guinea on last night's supper with "Tottie," of the Mashers' Music Hall, will have to take off his coat and begin to earn his living. And, as to the second part of the statement—about less trade and less employment—the point fails, for the diminution in trade and employment caused by the reduction in the expenditure of the idle consumers would be outweighed and compensated for several times over by the increase in the expenditure of the newly-enriched workers. The net result would be that the total trade of the country would be greater than ever, but with these two important differences: first, that the trade would be more in necessities and less in luxuries; and, second, that the spending and enjoying would be more amongst the

*The baker in the foregoing illustration is, of course, the representative, in general, of all the workers, and his loaves the representatives of all labour and commodities. That is understood.

workers and less amongst the idlers than heretofore. That would be all.

We now come to a different group of objectors, objectors who may be called alternativists, inasmuch as they agree that something should be done to ameliorate the present miserable condition of our working class, but advocate the adoption of other remedies rather than the shorter labour day. These alternativists may be divided into two classes, those who sincerely believe in the effectiveness of the alternatives they recommend, and those who advance those alternatives, knowing well their insufficiency, but for the purpose of obstructing and retarding any improvement or change from the present system. Let us examine these alternatives.

One is co-operation. There are two varieties of this article. One professes to admit the workers (as distinguished from the shareholders) to some share in the advantage of the system. The other makes no such pretence, but shamelessly appropriates the unpaid wages of its workers (called shareholders' profits) just as the most ordinary and least benevolent individual capitalists do. The latter kind we may dismiss at once. It does not pretend to solve the labour problem. And as for the former kind, although it undoubtedly benefits those workers who are within its favoured sphere, it can never reach the whole of the people. The very poor and destitute, must always, in the very nature of the case, remain outside its operations. They cannot take up shares, for they have no money. Therefore they would not draw any dividend. On the contrary, their labour would be laid under tribute to provide dividends for their wealthier fellow-workers, and for some who were not workers at all. If a co-operative system were established in which all the profits were equally divided among all the workers, and into which a poor man could enter with the same advantages as a rich man, then there would be no need for a law to shorten the hours of labour. But there is no such system in existence—nor, indeed, proposed, so that it is clear that we shall not find in co-operation an effective remedy for the economic slavery of the working class.

Then we have the new device of "profit-sharing" put forward; but this is only a plan of the more astute employers to attach the workers more securely to their present employment and the present system. It is, in fact, simply an insurance against strikes. The

workman does not receive his "profit" with his weekly wage, but has it credited to him in his employer's books or bank, and if he strikes or leaves, it is, for the most part, forfeit. Arrangements, it is true, are made by which the workman is to receive his profit, or a portion of it, at remote periods and with wide intervals; but, as a matter of fact, the bulk of it for the most time lies in the hands of the employer. The profit-sharing system is very profitable to the employer who adopts it, for the foolish workman, fancying that his fortune is as good as made, works himself to death's door to build up the establishment, returning in labour ten times the value of the profit put to his credit in the establishment's books. Such a system is an aggravation, instead of an amelioration, of the wretched condition of the workers. Its effect is to add to the labour in the unemployed labour market, instead of diminishing it; for as every worker under the profit-sharing system does more work than he otherwise would, it follows that there is less left for his fellow-workmen.

Another alternative that is sometimes suggested is State and municipal workshops and farms. How the simple circumstance that the State or municipality, and not a private individual, is the employer, is to effect an economic revolution is not explained. If the scheme of State or municipal workshops and farms is to be effective, it must be comprehensive, that is to say, it must offer employment to every unemployed man in the country. If it does that, it will find in the ranks of its workpeople many men who cannot work and many men who will not work. What is it to do with these? If it retains them, who is to bear the burden of their maintenance? The farmers and manufacturers with whose industries they compete, or the workmen in individualist employ whose wages their competition will lower? If, on the other hand, it discharges them, the central purpose of the scheme is defeated and the whole thing falls to the ground again. The plan is obviously hopeless from every point of view; from the point of view of justice no less than from that of practicability, and it is strange indeed to find its advocates still advancing it in the face of innumerable experiments, every one of which was a complete and admitted failure.

Another remedy that is persistently put forward by the younger type of reformers is Land Law Reform. Some of these propose to take the land of the country from its present owners

and vest it in the State; others to tax the land up to its full present value. The former are again sub-divided into some who would compensate the present owners, some who would take it without compensation, and some who, adopting a middle course, would allow the present owners to retain it during their own lives and the lives of their children, but make the State the heir of the second generation. Without stopping to discuss either of these three plans, beyond saying that the first would be both useless and extravagant and the second impossible, I would only ask how either or all of them could possibly absorb the surplus in the labour market? If the present owners were to-morrow to make a present of their lands to the State, what could the State do with them? Build houses on them? There are already more houses than there are tenants who can pay for them. Grow crops and rear cattle? The crops and cattle markets are already glutted with foreign produce with which English-grown produce cannot successfully compete. And if houses are to be built for which there are no paying tenants, and crops to be raised for which there is no effective market, where is the advantage, and who is to stand the loss? The proposal is our old friend, State farms and workshops, over again. As for the taxers, the Single Taxers, as they call themselves, their proposal is even more absurd. Why wealth in the form of land should be taxed, and not in others, is not easy to understand from the economist point of view. The explanation is, however, possibly to be found in the fact that the owners of the land are, as a class, Conservatives in politics, whereas the Single Taxers are Radicals to a man. But economic difficulties cannot be solved by political prejudices, and it is quite evident that the taxation of land, light or heavy, can have no possible influence, under present tariff conditions, on the surplus in the labour market, and the surplus in the labour market is the crux of the whole matter.

Another remedy that is extensively advocated is emigration. Now, it may be at once conceded that, given proper conditions as to climate, occupation, age, and means, emigration is, from the point of view of the political economist, one of the least objectionable of the alternative remedies proposed. But it has the fatal defect of being unacceptable to the workers, who will not willingly adopt it, and who cannot, of course, be compelled to do so. And

that fact, by itself, puts the proposal out of court. So strong, indeed, is the workman's repugnance to this "remedy," that he instinctively looks upon any one who recommends it as his enemy and the enemy of his class. "Why," he asks, "if there are too many of us in this little island, should I be the one to leave it? I cultivate the soil and raise the food stuffs; I rear the dwellings and weave the clothing. Who is more necessary to the community, that he should stay and I should go?" There is no answer to that question. If there is to be an expatriation of any portion of the community, both common-sense and equity suggest that it shall be that portion which contributes least, not that which contributes most, to the necessities of the whole. But more material than even the foregoing considerations is the obvious fact that any quantity of emigration of Scotsmen and Englishmen from their native shores would not solve the problem of a surplus in the labour market; for, as fast as they went, their places would be filled twice over by Russians and Germans ready and eager to do the Briton's work at half his wages. By emigrating the Briton may, or may not, better his position as an individual; but, as long as British ports are flood-gates for the wholesale admission of destitute foreigners, his departure from his native land can have no influence one way or another on the surplus in its labour market. There is one result, certainly, that follows on the Briton's emigration and on his place being taken by the destitute foreigner, and that is great deterioration in the quality of the work done and consequent damage to the reputation of so-called British-made goods in both our home and foreign markets. Britain already suffers heavily in consequence of this injury to her good name, and will suffer still more in the years that are ahead of us. But her statesmen and men of affairs are either blind to its cause or have not the courage to adopt the necessary remedy. They see the evil plainly enough, deplore the rapidity with which it is spreading, and prate fatuously about the necessity for "technical education" for our working men. Some of them, no doubt, deliberately prefer and welcome the era of shoddy. It will fill their purse and last their time. And, after that, their country and their countrymen can go to the devil. Some day, and that, I think, soon, the British workmen will themselves take up this question of leaving their native land to make room for blackleg

foreigners. But, until they do, they must put up with all the hardships and injustice of the present system, for I do not see any man among our rulers possessed of the wisdom and courage necessary to grapple effectively with the evil.

There is another alternative sometimes suggested—Malthusianism; but the advocates of that peculiar nostrum require but little notice. They are a decaying group, whose utterances attract less and less attention as the real points of the labour question become better understood. That their “remedy” is an unnatural one is no defect in their eyes, but rather a recommendation. They are above—or below—nature, and plume themselves on the detachment. To do them justice, it must be owned that their practice corresponds with their precepts, but whether voluntarily or not, only themselves can say. However, be that as it may, the answer to them is that their “remedy” is not only unnatural but impossible, and, that being the case, it need not be further discussed. A state of society in which all the children were slain—a sort of magnified and continuous Massacre of the Innocents—is conceivable; although it is not difficult to forecast the time when such a society would come to an end. But a state of society in which no children shall be born, or only the children of the wealthier members of the community, is an inconceivable monstrosity, the advocates of which are protected only from one’s hostility by one’s contempt. And, finally, as with the plea for emigration, what is the use of limiting our own population if the populations of other and larger countries are to come in and fill our places!

The last of the alternative remedies is thrift, or temperance. But it is evident, in the first place, that this remedy, like co-operation, can only be very partial in the extent to which it can be applied, and that it is therefore quite ineffective for the purpose in view. One worker may, it is true, by dint of sacrifices and self-denials on his own part, and by hardships and privations on the part of those near and dear to him, lift himself, after years of suffering, above the level of his fellow-workers and out of the slough of poverty. But what follows? He has attained to that position by his own sufferings and exertions and by the sufferings and exertions of his wife and children. I will not stop to discuss the morality of that proceeding, although, undoubtedly, its methods

will not always bear strict examination, and sometimes the victims do not survive the ordeal. But how does our risen workman maintain himself in his new position? Still by his own sacrifices and exertions? Not at all. On the contrary; he himself becomes an employer of labour, employing, probably enough, some of those old fellow-workers of his from whose side he has risen, and extracting from their labour profits that enable him to live, and live well, without doing any work himself. What better is the general condition of the working-class, what mitigation of their misery is there, through this man's thrift? Obviously none at all. He has lifted himself up, it is true, but he has left his fellows down. In fact, he has aggravated their conditions, for he has created, in his own person, another employer of labour who has to be kept out of the profits extracted from their toil.

At this point it may be convenient to take note of a suggestion that is sometimes made to the effect that, if a shorter labour day is decreed by Parliament it should not be made universal and compulsory, but optional in its operation. That is to say, that any trade, or any district may by its votes decide whether it shall be included in, or exempted from, the operation of the new law. A little examination of the question shows that this proposal is entirely inadmissible. First, on the ground of its injustice, and, second, on the ground of the disturbance and chaos it would involve in the industries of the country. To subject one district to the operation of the law while leaving another exempt would obviously be most unfair to the employers in the included district, and probably ensure their ruin. Working a shorter day, yet paying the full wages (for that is the essence of the proposal), they could not put their goods on the market at the same price as their rivals—in, probably, an adjoining town—whose workmen were still working the longer day. Then another thing would happen. The employer in the included district would close his factory in that district and open one in the exempted district. And thus every included district would in time become deserted, all the work would be done in the exempted districts, and the law practically nullified. So much for the districts. As to trades, the incongruities that would be involved if these were allowed to claim exemption would be even greater than in the case of districts. Suppose, for example, the blacksmith was an eight hour man and the ham-

merman was a ten hour man, or *vice versa*, what is the one to do when the other leaves off work for the day? There is, also, the bricklayer and his labourer, the plumber and his "mate," the 'bus driver and the 'bus conductor, and a score of other conjoint occupations in which the co-operation of one workman is essential to the employment of another. Nor is this all, for there are different societies of one trade, as, for example, the Amalgamated Carpenters and the General Union of Carpenters; the Amalgamated Railway Servants and the Railway Workers' Union. It is absolutely certain that some of these societies would differ from others in their decision, in which case it would be obviously impossible for any work in which the members of both were employed to be carried on. The whole suggestion, whether in regard to trades or to districts, is, in fact, so transparently unjust and impracticable that one can only conclude that those who put it forward either do not understand the alphabet of the question, or are, at heart, opposed altogether to a legally-enforced shorter labour day.

The various schemes we have now considered—Co-operation, Profit-sharing, State and Municipal Farms and Workshops, Land Law Reform, Emigration, Malthusianism, and Thrift—may be said to exhaust the list of proposals seriously put forward as alternatives to a shortening of the labour day. But there still remain to be disposed of those objectors who declare their willingness, and, in some cases, even desire, to see the labour day shortened, on condition that the change is not effected by legal enactment. It is not easy to understand intelligent men taking up this position. They admit that the shortening of the labour day is a matter of the very greatest consequence to the workers, yet they haggle over the mere question of method, and declare that if their method—the Trade Union method—is not adopted, they will resist the whole project altogether. Many of them know perfectly well that the method they insist upon is utterly ineffective, and that the method they oppose is the only one that can succeed. They know that there is a huge surplus of unemployed labour in the labour market, to be drawn upon by employers when strikes occur, rendering absolutely futile all the attempts of the unions to effect the object in view. They know, moreover, that the arm of the law is necessary for the protection of the workers (even when these are grown men and members of Trade Societies) against the

cupidity of their employers, and show their recognition of that fact by their warm support of Parliamentary decrees forbidding the payment of wages in kind (the Truck Act), specifying the limits and conditions of compensation (Workmen's Compensation Act) which employers shall pay to their workmen in case of accidents, etc., etc. The real truth seems to be that these objectors to legislative action are not honest. This opinion was held and was publicly expressed by one of the workmen's Parliamentary representatives, the late Mr. Benjamin Pickard. If they were honest in their professions of friendship towards a shorter labour day, they would adopt for its attainment that legal method which they deem necessary for the adjustment of other and less important matters of dispute between the same parties. The fact that they do not adopt that method, but, on the contrary, stubbornly oppose it, justifies the conclusion that their professed friendship is not sincere, but is merely a cloak for a hostility which they dare not openly avow.

It is, of course, possible that some of these objectors are not dishonest, but only stupid. This would, indeed, appear to be the fact in certain cases, judging by the arguments these gentlemen themselves put forward. One of these, a leading Radical member of Parliament, bases his hostility to legislative interference with the hours of labour on the ground that the change ought to be brought about by the action of the Trades Unions; and then the same gentleman goes on to declare that a reduction of the hours of labour must be resisted, inasmuch as it would ruin the country's trade and destroy its industries! Now, one would think that it must be clear, even to a Radical member of Parliament, that the two positions here assumed are mutually inconsistent, and that, to put it mildly, they ought not to be taken up at one and the same time by one and the same individual. If an eight hours or nine hours day, enforced by law, will ruin trade, will not a similar day, enforced by Trades Union action do the same? One would think so. Yet the gentleman referred to is not without his admirers, and his "arguments" against the Eight Hours Bill are always vigorously applauded by the employers of labour on both sides of the House of Commons. The average employer of labour is just as illogical and inconsistent as his Parliamentary champion. He, also, resists and denounces

an Eight Hours Bill as "grandmotherly legislation," sympathizes with the workman's desire for more leisure, but declares that the object ought to be effected by the action of the men's Trade Societies, "which are well able to defend the interests and promote the welfare of their members." Then, when these Trade Societies, using the only weapon they have got, strike in favour of shorter hours, the employer has no language strong enough to describe the iniquity and folly of their proceedings, and straight-way rakes the English gutters and the foreign labour market for "blacklegs" to take the places and do the work of the strikers! What shall we say of such objectors?

There are others who must be judged more leniently—old Trade Union leaders and officials, men who have spent their lives in the cause of labour, who do not understand the new economic doctrine, and who cling with an honest infatuation to a belief in the potency of their old organizations. It is nothing to them that these organizations have all these years failed to effectively remedy the condition of the workers, leaving them to-day as completely the victims of an overflowing labour market as they were when they first started their operations. They pride themselves on the success they achieved in the Nine Hours movement, but do not see that the very fact of the labour market remaining, nevertheless, glutted as ever from then to now is conclusive evidence of the impotence of the Trade Union method. It is possible, of course, that some of these Trade Union leaders, touched with the disease of Anarchism, may fancy that, some fine day, the position may be carried by physical force, by the strong right arm of the picket. That would be the wildest of delusions. In the event of any attempt of that kind the whole community would rise against the unions; the civil authority would stretch out its arm for the protection of the "blacklegs," and if that arm was not long enough or strong enough, the military power would come out to its support. The issue would not be doubtful. The unionists would be ground to powder, and Trades Unionism and the interests of labour would receive a blow from which they would not recover for two or three generations.

Having shown that the legislative regulation of the labour day is an absolute necessity for the workers, I will now proceed, very briefly, to show that it will be advantageous also to honest and

honourable employers. This may sound strange doctrine, but it is quite true. Everybody will admit, employers of labour as well as others, that although it is impossible that Trade Unions can ever succeed in establishing universally such a shorter labour day as would quite absorb the surplus in the labour market, yet it is certain that they will continue, however ineffectually, their efforts in that direction. In some trades in certain districts an eight hours day has already been attained, and the battle will no doubt be extended and continued. Now, it is inevitable that if the extension of the sphere of the eight hours day is forced by Trade Union action, it will not only entail much suffering, for the time being, upon the workers, but that it will also bring ruin upon numerous individual employers of labour. That is inevitable. The particular industries assailed may themselves survive the attack, and the bulk of the employers may be even better circumstanced after it than they were before. But that some employers, as well as some workmen, will fall in the struggle, never to rise again, is as certain as anything can be. Now, the employers are not ignorant of this fact. They are, on the contrary, keenly alive to it. And it is this knowledge and the fears that it inspires that impel these employers to resist all demands for shorter hours of labour. So it comes to pass that when such demand is made by a Trade Union, the employer answers that he cannot afford to pay the additional wages that the shortening of the hours of labour would involve. And the answer is perfectly true. The position of an employer of labour is like that of Germany in Europe: he has an enemy on each of his frontiers. In front of him is the produce market, into which he can only enter with produce at least equal in value and cheapness to the produce of his rivals; behind him is the labour market, from which he must draw supplies of labour at least equal in value and cheapness to those of his rivals. Failure in any one of these points means his destruction; and, inasmuch as the payment of a higher rate of wages to his workmen, *while his rivals continued to pay the lower*, would involve that failure, the employer very naturally sets his face against the demand for a shorter labour day. In this apprehension as to the result of a shorter labour day the employer is both right and wrong. It all depends on *how the change is effected*. If it is effected spasmodically and piecemeal, as it is now being attempted by the Trade Unions,

the employer's apprehensions are well founded and almost certain to be realised. If it is his fate to be the first to be attacked by the unions, he will find himself assailed and harassed, while his rival, occupying, possibly, adjoining premises, remains untouched; and, while he is engaged in a life or death struggle with his assailants, his rival will carry off the trade and he will be ruined. All that is quite clear. But if, on the contrary, the change is effected *universally and simultaneously*, the employer's difficulties vanish—or, rather, they do not arise. For all his rivals are placed in the same position that he is placed in. They will have to work the same shortened hours that he works, and pay the same increased wages that he pays, and therefore they will not be able to rob him of his share of the market. That, also, is quite clear; and we see that the employer's interests are not really opposed to the shortening of the labour day, but only to the spasmodic and partial method adopted by the Trade Unions for effecting the change; and that, if he can be made sure that *the change shall be universal and simultaneous*, his objections at once and entirely disappear. But he must be made quite sure. No mere hopes or expectations will, or ought to, satisfy him. He must be made absolutely sure. And what guarantee can we give to the employer? How shall we make him sure that the change in the labour day shall be made simultaneous and universal? The only guarantee the employer can accept in this matter is the security of the law, and the security of the law can only be given if the change is decreed and enforced by law. So that it is clear that, in the interests of the employers themselves, as well as in the interests of the workers, employed and unemployed, the legislative shortening of the labour day has become an absolute necessity.

The argument is now complete. I submit that I have conclusively proved my three main propositions, namely: first, that the present economic condition of the workers is unjust; second, that that condition, being unjust, ought to be remedied; and, third, that the legislative restriction of the hours of labour is not only the best, but the only practicable and effective, means by which that condition can be satisfactorily and permanently remedied. We have examined all the objections to a shorter labour day, and have seen that they cannot be maintained. We have examined also all the alternative remedies

proposed, and found them either insufficient or impracticable. And we have looked forward to the results of a shorter labour day, and find that, while they will be immensely beneficial to the great masses of the people, they will entail hardship upon none—the wealthy, idle consumer, upon whom alone will fall the cost of the change, being well able to afford it. It is, of course, not to be expected that so great a change will be effected without a struggle. The wealthy, idle consumer, although well able to afford the draft it will make upon his hoard, will resist it with all the powers he can command. And when we remember that, for the most part, the daily and weekly press is in his hands, and the average member of Parliament either his dependent or his nominee, we must acknowledge that he has many and powerful voices in his service.

A final word. It may be said, if the workers cannot, by means of their unions, obtain a limitation of the labour day, how can they hope to obtain it by any other? The answer is very simple. In the one case they have the whole community outside their own ranks combined against them. In the other, the community is divided into two almost equal parts (political parties), each intent on its own interests and most anxious for the support and assistance of the workers in the furtherance of these interests. Neither of these parties, it is true, will help the workers to a shorter labour day, if it can avoid it; but either of them will certainly do so if that is the price of the support and assistance aforesaid. Of course, if the support and assistance are always given to the same party, as is the practice of the Liberal Labour leaders, and always without any equivalent (other than personal) being exacted, then no equivalent will ever be given. But, if one may judge by certain signs of the times, that practice does not commend itself to the bulk of the workers, and it is possible that it may be summarily stopped at an early date, and another practice, more calculated to benefit these workers, adopted in its stead. It would, indeed, be a pity if it were otherwise, for the opportunity is a great one, not possessed in its completeness by the workers of any other country in the world at any time in the world's history. For these two great political parties of ours, Conservatives and Liberals, are so immersed in their mutual rivalries and so equally matched that they will give practically any terms to

allies. This is the opportunity of the workers, an opportunity they never had before, and an opportunity which, by some change in the Constitution at present unforeseen, may pass from their grasp never to return. *They have votes*, and their votes can restore the Liberal party to place and power or doom them to perpetual opposition. Their votes can establish Mr. Balfour and his friends in office for the remainder of their lives or plant Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and Mr. Lloyd-George on the front Ministerial benches of the House of Commons. Is there any doubt, *can* there be any doubt, what the result would be if the workers were to decide, once for all, that *only such Parliamentary candidates as pledged themselves to an eight hours labour day, irrespective of all other questions*, would receive their support? There can be no doubt. Not less than 90 per cent. of the Liberals and 70 per cent. of the Conservatives would instantly swallow the pledge. There would be no more strikes, with their concomitants of misery and suffering to the workers; no more civil war, with unionist and non-unionist workmen killing each other for the chance of a bare existence; no more disturbances of trade, local or national, with consequent ruin to honest employers of labour. Everything would be adjusted quietly, constitutionally, and in order. The machinery is all ready, waiting to be put in motion.



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